

FOSTERING ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN A BILINGUAL
KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM THROUGH READING WORKSHOPS

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Abstract

The development of literacy skills is essential for helping young learners succeed in school. However, for bilingual students this process becomes more complex and may take more time to achieve. This thesis project focuses on the implementation of reading workshops to foster and develop students' foundational English literacy skills in a bilingual kindergarten classroom (5 to 6 years old) setting in the United States. First, this thesis project aims to identify whether the implementation of reading workshops develops students' English literacy skills. Second, this thesis project examines whether the Interactive Read Aloud Model and the Think Pair Share technique foster bilingual learners' English language development.

This thesis project also aims to foster a healthy and appropriate classroom environment that enables bilingual students to acquire foundational English literacy skills. This thesis project presents five reading workshops for teachers to use in the kindergarten classrooms to promote bilingual students' development of primary English literacy skills. The five reading workshops are made up of five mini lessons which focus on developing English as a second language.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all students I have had the opportunity to teach in this long teaching journey. They have been the main reason that has kept me learning and growing as a teacher every single day. I also dedicate this to my own children Gaby and Anthony. I appreciate your time and patience. I will never forget all the time I did not spend with you during my long studying hours doing this master's degree. Thanks so much for your support. I love you!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Reading is an important academic skill children need to develop effective oral language skills, written literacy and expanded knowledge of the world. A vast amount of research has continually shown how the frequency of shared reading is associated with children's language development, including language growth, reading achievement, and emergent literacy (Britto & BrooksGunn, 2001; Sénéchal et al., 1997; Bus et al., 1995). As early as 1985, reading aloud to children was hailed as "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 23).

Considering this research, I thought it vital that the complex process of learning to read was carried out in a healthy, pleasant, and controlled academic environment which enabled students to develop the foundational reading skills needed for success. It was extremely important for students to develop a concept of print – an understanding of how print works. My students needed to learn how to manage books and understand text directionally (left-to right and top to bottom), one -to -one matching, the difference between letters and words, and the function of punctuation.

Developing these skills was foundational in my classroom because they helped the children know “where to attend, in what sequence, and how to pick up information perceptually (Clay, 1991). Since children learned these concepts both through explicit reading as well as implicitly through modeling when reading text together (Gehsmann &

Templeton, 2013), my plan focused on both activities daily. Due to the implementation of inappropriate early reading strategies, educators have always faced some students who had struggled with learning to read. These students did not experience reading as enjoyable or important.

On the contrary, they found it to be boring and frustrating. To change this reality, educators have needed to identify and address each child's academic needs. I wanted to find appropriate strategies and methods that enabled my students to succeed in learning to read and, thus, to enjoy reading. Having this information guided me in designing appropriate and enjoyable reading lessons which shaped learners' mindsets about what reading really meant.

My years of experience in this field, first as a language learner and then as a teacher of English/Spanish language and core subjects in and out of the United States, helped me to develop a global insight into how education worked in different countries. This extensive experience allowed me to expand my knowledge and realized how complex and demanding it was to learn to read in another language.

As a student and as a learner, I experienced the importance of recognizing and valuing another's cultures and of building relationships based on that respect. Working to build such teacher-student relationships improved students' achievements in the classroom. In addition, this educational practice allowed me to develop a broader view of each student's uniqueness, particular personality, and culture group. I also learned that the previous factors had a strong influence on a child's learning process.

Thus, educators must acknowledge that teaching children to read is the single most important thing we do. As educators, we know this. However, we have sometimes

allowed others without this experience and knowledge to make policies that tell us how to teach children to read (Calkins, 2015). Consequently, to develop this research project, I was inspired by all the hundreds of amazing children I have had the pleasure to serve and to learn from during my long teaching journey.

The primary goal of this research project was to describe processes that foster reading in a bilingual kindergarten classroom. Such students often had limited oral skills and low reading comprehension, among other difficulties in the target language. These students were more proficient in Spanish language but not in English at the time they started kindergarten. Consequently, the purpose of this model was to use both languages to teach content and help students develop proficiency in English while maintaining and continuing to develop skills in their native language.

As described above, the population in which I developed this project consisted of 24 kindergarten bilingual students whose language of preference and competence was Spanish. Most of these students had limited oral, reading, and writing skills in the English language. In addition, these children likely had different cultural experiences since they came from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Spain, or other countries where Spanish was the main language.

The main goal of this research project was to foster and nurture a pleasant and effective environment for learning English as a second language in students with limited English literacy skills through the implementation of controlled shared reading workshops. To develop this project, I selected five relevant non-fiction books with appropriate topics for students. I chose bilingual books with familiar cultural content which helped emergent bilingual students become actively involved in the lessons and

which also helped them learn more about their own cultural heritage. to preserve their cultural values and know more about them and their families. Using these books, I designed appropriate reading workshops for kindergarten students who had limited literacy skills in English language.

These five reading workshops fostered the learning of English language, nurtured emergent bilingual students' foundational skills, and captured their attention. The implementation of these reading workshops helped emergent bilingual learners to build a mindset that reading was fun while they were developing significant English language skills.

The design of these five reading workshops enabled students to make use of their previous knowledge, which allowed them to connect the language of learning with previous life experiences. These previous experiences were transferred from one language to the other and, therefore, helped students appreciate and loved reading. They learned the skills needed to gain English literacy. And, most importantly, this was developed in a healthy, pleasant, and engaging educational environment that increased student motivation and reduced anxiety levels in the classroom.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Brown (2014) projected that by the year 2050, Latinx will account for 29 percent of the population of the United States compared to 14 percent in 2005, and the number of Latinx children enrolled in U.S. schools will also increase. The Pew Hispanic Resource Center, in a study of the U.S. Census data, concluded that Latinx currently make up one fourth of the students in U.S. schools (Fry & Lopez, 2012).

Despite the growth of Latinx students in the U.S. schools, school curricula continue to exclude students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, including Latinx students. Latinx researchers and scholars have documented and called for instruction that uses emergent bilingual students' social, cultural and community resources (Sanchez et al., 2009; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Jimenez, 2003).

It is a reality that diversity and multiculturalism are relevant factors to take into account in schools in the United States nowadays. Therefore, it is extremely important that teachers who are part of these educational processes know, understand, and implement effective methods and strategies that help emerging bilingual students to be successful in school. The conceptions teachers have of these students can impact the way that they interact with and instruct this group of students (Yoon, 2008; Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004).

As a bilingual teacher, I have always been concerned about the limited time bilingual students have for first language instruction (L1), and the limited learning resources bilingual teachers possess to support that instruction effectively (Reeves, 2006; Gandara et al., 2005). There is a belief that “good teaching” is effective for all students,

including students learning an additional language (Harper et al., 2008). Given the importance of students' language development for classroom success, all classrooms with emergent bilingual students need to understand the best practices for meeting the needs of students learning a new language (Gandara & Santibaez, 2006). Thus, bilingual educators need to identify and reflect on the qualities of effective bilingual teachers and their bilingual students. These qualities refer to the knowledge of languages used such as: forms, mechanics, and feeling of efficacy. The implementation of these qualities may help students achieve their academic goals; their skills to build strong relationships and cultural knowledge.

In this chapter, I will define and analyze research pertaining to literacy and biliteracy. Then, I will define and analyze the similarities and differences among share reading and read aloud approaches. Later, I will define the Class Interactive Read Aloud model and explain its benefits in helping emergent bilingual students develop literacy skills in L1 (first language) and L2 (second language). Similarly, I will provide a definition and analysis of the benefits of Think Pair Share technique in helping emergent bilingual students develop oral and written skills.

Literacy and biliteracy.

Literacy is consistently associated with educational success and achievement. It is part of the cultural capital valued by our society, and achievement in it serves as a primary gatekeeper for entry into educational institutions, the workforce, and leadership positions (Gutierrez, 1992). In other words, biliteracy is the ability to read and write in

two or more languages. It is associated with the academic achievement of students who speak English as a second language.

Hornberger (1990) defined biliteracy as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (p. 213). As literacy skills encompass competence in communicating and using a writing system, biliteracy development takes place across oral and written language as bilingual individuals develop continuous sequential characteristics of language and literacy competencies across two languages (Gort & Bauer, 2012). Therefore, considering aspects and contexts of language use and learning is necessary for understanding biliteracy development.

In addition, biliteracy might be fostered when bilingual children are engaged in literacy practices in both their languages in the classroom rather than being subjected to an English-only educational setting (Reyes, 2012). Thus, biliteracy is the ability to read and write in two or more languages. It is also associated with the academic achievement of students who speak English as a second language.

Collier (1992), Snow (1990), and Hakuta (1986) demonstrated the importance of literacy in the first language for students’ full development of proficiency in the language of instruction, subsequent academic success, and important levels of self-confidence. Although bilingual children’s home literacy experiences are rich, their linguistic and cultural repertoires from their families and communities need to be recognized and incorporated into subtractive school curricula that focus primarily on English development (Purcell-Gates, 2013; Kenner et al., 2008). Therefore, the home context plays a critical role in biliteracy development because parents can determine how to

support their children's biliteracy process. Despite parents' willingness, bilingual children's facility with their two languages and motivation to use their two languages change over time (Ro & Cheatham, 2009). Whereas the children's literacy skills in English may become strengthened noticeably as their participation in English-speaking contexts increases, their heritage language skills may plateau or even decrease due to the limited opportunities to use the language and their decreasing motivation. In the same way, bilingual emergent student understanding shows how they use linguistic resources (e.g., sounds, intonation, among others) and other characteristics (e.g., directionality, spatiality, etc.) to differentiate two languages in print and to make meaning across two writing systems (Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Buckwalter & Lo, 2002). Bilingual students' literacy development across two writing systems is bidirectional and the literacy development in one language can contribute to such development in the other language (Dworin, 2003). Additionally, bilingual children's literacy development occurs fluidly across their two languages and media (Moll, 2001).

In other words, children who learn to read and write in Spanish at home, at school in their country of origin, or in another country do not have to start from the beginning when learning to read in English at school. Lanauze and Snow (1989) stated that "language skills acquired in a first language can, at least if developed beyond a certain point in L1 (first language), be recruited at relatively initial stages of L2 (second language) acquisition for relatively skilled performance in L2, thus shortcutting the normal developmental progression in L2" (p. 337).

Researchers have consistently indicated that academic and linguistic skills transfer to the second language even in the case of languages with dissimilar writing

systems (Ovando & Collier, 1998; Au, 1993; Cummins, 1991). Literacy skills and strategies used in one language transfer to the other, especially when both languages use the same writing system. For example, children whose first language is Spanish, French, Italian, German, or Portuguese can identify some letters and sounds in English since all these languages use the Roman alphabet. Children literate in languages that use non-Roman alphabets, such as Russian or Mandarin Chinese, have additional challenges when learning English. Yet, even when the vocabulary, grammar, and orthography differ, an entire range of skills in decoding and reading strategies transfer from the first language to the second. Children who are literate in one language already know that print carries meaning, that the stream of print is broken into segments such as words or characters, and that there are rules about how print is laid out on the page. Specific examples of transferable concepts and strategies include scanning, skimming, contextual guessing at words, tolerance for ambiguity, reading for meaning, skipping unknown words, monitoring, recognizing textual structure, and using previous learning and background knowledge to understand text (Baker, 1998; Jiménez et al., 1995; Calero-Breckheimer & Goetz, 1993).

Maintaining first language literacy instruction has also been associated with better overall academic performance, English language proficiency, and dropout rates for ESL students who speak minority languages (Thomas & Collier, 1996; Ramirez, 1992). Hence, supporting the development of biliteracy is crucial in preparing students from minority language backgrounds to succeed in educational settings. For children learning a second language, having opportunities to read materials in their first language can serve to affirm that they are good readers, even though they may struggle when they read

English (Ernst & Richard, 1995). The benefits also can include increased enthusiasm and comprehension in students.

Another key challenge for researchers interested in young children's biliteracy development is that biliterates "are simultaneously developing oral and written proficiency in both their languages with various levels of competence in the two modalities as well as the two languages" (Reyes, 2012, p. 312). Moll et al. (2001) emphasized the complexity of biliteracy development in young children. They noted that bilingual children, unlike their monolingual counterparts, may become literate in a language they do not speak fluently, and their literate ability may exceed their oral fluency in one language but not the other" (p. 447). According to Bauer and Gort (2012), students who are emergent biliteracy are qualitatively different from monolinguals in that they approach literacy activities in bilingually defined ways. This signals the important role of trained bilingual teachers in designing and implementing appropriate learning activities that enable bilingual learners to use both their first (L1) and their second language (L2) in the classroom. This learning environment will enable bilingual students to use their native language and background knowledge to develop literacy in both languages simultaneously.

Share reading and read aloud

Baright (1882) encouraged teachers of young children to read aloud as "the exercise of reading aloud is a mental discipline of children in public schools" (p. 1).

Today, reading aloud to young children is an important part of a comprehensive emergent

literacy programs in the U.S. schools (Delacruz, 2013; Fox, 2013; Pentimonti & Justice, 2010; Beck et al., 2003).

Consequently, shared reading is another model for teachers reading aloud. In this model, students read along, either silently or aloud as well (Stahl, 2012; Holdaway, 1982). As students read along with the teacher, they learn vocabulary, text structure, and text features (McKeown & Beck, 2006; Coyne et al., 2004; Hadaway et al., 2001). This model can be especially helpful for students reading in a second language who benefit from the support that hearing an expert reader while simultaneously following text on their own affords. For young and less experienced readers, shared reading can occur with big books, which are oversized copies of common trade books that teachers hold open to students. By the time a student has mastered important concepts about print, such as one-to-one matching, they need to hold their own copies of the text and actively participate in reading (Stahl, 2012; Kuhn et al., 2010; Fisher et al., 2008). This kind of reading is often integrated with vocabulary instruction as words are pulled from the text for special attention, and lessons on the mechanics and skills of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, punctuation, sight words, and comprehension. Sometimes shared reading includes rereading where students read in unison with rhyming text, text that has repeating phrases, or poetry.

Class interactive read aloud model

Interactive reading aloud has enormous value for children's literacy development (Lennox, 2013; Sipe, 2008). If conducted consistently, this practice develops children's book selection, oral language, vocabulary, content knowledge, and inferential thinking.

Children develop a sense of genre (including narrative and expository text structures), archetypes, and the craft of authors and illustrators. They develop foundational skills, such as concepts of print, within meaningful contexts. Teachers model how to use language during interactive read- aloud. Lennox (2013) points out the shift in power dynamics in dialogic discourse when teachers genuinely share authority with children, promoting reciprocal conversational exchanges that generate new perspectives, activating listening, and collaborative thinking with the text. Children learn to apply these ways of thinking as they read independently (Sipe, 2008). Therefore, how interactive read- aloud occurs matters for children's learning opportunities and language use (Lennox, 2013; Barrentine, 1996). Barrentine (1996) delineated the seven steps for planning once a teacher chooses a high- quality, engaging book, including setting reading goals for students, building their background knowledge, and thinking about how to frame questions and prompts and the kinds of interactions having cautions against overplanning (Sipe, 2008). Sipe's (2008) research on children's construction of understanding during interactive read- aloud reveals a playful, "carnavalesque" atmosphere, so he advises teachers to be in the moment and invite children's lives through interpretations to arise (p. 229). Similarly, Barrentine (1996) advised teachers to always be prepared to relinquish your plans in response to your students' interactions (p. 42).

Boutte and Muller (2018) and Cunningham and Enriquez (2013) advised planning collaboratively and connecting reading goals to curriculum standards. According to Beck and McKeown (2002), teachers should plan to review vocabulary, before, during, and after the read- aloud. Beck and McKeown (2002) also suggested refraining from always first showing illustrations, as they might hinder students' envisioning from the spoken

words alone. Other researchers (e.g., Cunningham & Enriquez, 2013; Sipe, 2008) emphasized the value of studying illustrations and peritext for children's comprehension. Beck and McKeown (2001) further recommended follow- up questions that cause children to elaborate and develop their initial thinking. Similarly, Hoffman (2011) showed the co- construction of knowledge between teachers and students when teachers ask follow- up questions that break the typical initiate, respond, evaluate (IRE) pattern of classroom discourse. Pantaleo (2007) presented how she developed after thinking by valuing cognitive and social functions of collaborative discussion with first- grade students: "The students' language and behaviors mutually affected each other and the group as a whole, and the group affected the individual; individual and collective identities were constantly changing, adapting, and emerging" (p. 445). May et al. (2014) emphasized teachers' cultural competence when they are responsive in ways that value, integrate, and build on students' contributions in discussion.

Furthermore, reading aloud has been recommended as part of elementary classroom reading instruction for decades (e.g., Teale, 2003). It is the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 23). Although the daily enactments of classroom read aloud may not always meet the standards for excellence documented in the research literature (Hoffman et al., 1993), there continues to be widespread advocacy for read aloud to promote interests, vocabulary, appreciation, fluency, and comprehension (e.g., Tompkins, 2014; Miller, 2013; Fox, 2008). When reading aloud is interactive, it is an effective tool for teaching the emergent literacy skills children need to become competent, fluent readers (Lennox, 2013; Silverman et al., 2013; Lane & Wright, 2007; Henk et al., 2000).

In recent years, there have been calls for “interactive read aloud” to emphasize the active and participatory role of children in the read aloud experience (e.g., Lennox, 2013; Wiseman, 2011; Fisher et al., 2009; Pantaleo, 2007; Barrentine, 1992). Fountas and Pinnell (2006) described interactive reading aloud as deliberate and explicit instructional activities that involve the teacher modeling vocabulary development, reading with fluency and demonstrating comprehension strategies to students, while allowing opportunities for students to join in the discussion and interaction. A typical interactive read aloud consists of selection and preparation of a text, an opening, reading aloud, embedded teaching, text talk, discussion, a record of reading, and written or artistic response and self-evaluation. In their observational study of interactive read aloud Fisher et al. (2008) identified seven characteristics of effective interactive read aloud:

1. Books chosen were appropriate to students’ interests and matched to their developmental, emotional, and social levels.
2. Selections had been previewed and practiced by the teacher.
3. A clear purpose for the read-aloud was established.
4. Teachers modeled fluent oral reading when they read the text.
5. Teachers were animated and used expressions.
6. Teachers stopped periodically and thoughtfully questioned the students to focus them on specifics of the text.
7. Connections were made to independent reading and writing (pp. 10-11).

While variations of interactive reading aloud emphasize distinctive features, most emphasize the critical role the teacher plays in fostering conversations around meaning

making. This work around interactive reading aloud has focused on discussion and the discursive moves that a teacher can make in promoting interaction.

Think pair share technique

The Think Pair Share technique is a part of cooperative learning discussion. It is a simple technique, but extremely useful for the teaching and learning process, which was developed by Frank Lyman of the University of Maryland. The people can practice Think Pair Share technique everyday especially in the teaching and learning process. This technique is easy to use for students. Himmele and Himmele (2011) stated that Think Pair Share is an easy total participation technique that you can start implementing every day. Think pair share is a simple but powerful tool that should be used repeatedly and consistently throughout the day. It means using prompts that require students to analyze the various points of view or the components that are inherent in the standard target. Ask questions that require students to explain how these components fit together or affect one another. Arends (2009) stated that the think pair share has some steps that should be followed by the teacher such as follows: Step 1: Thinking, the teacher poses a question, or an issue associated with the lesson and asks students to spend a minute thinking alone about the answer or the issue. Students need to be taught that talking is not part of thinking time. Step 2: Pairing, next, the teacher asks students to pair with their friends. Then, discuss what they have been thinking about. Interaction during this period can be sharing answers if a question has been posed or sharing ideas if a specific issue was identified. Usually, the teacher allows no more than four or five minutes for pairing. Step 3: Sharing, in the last step, the teachers ask the pairs to share what they have been talking

about with the whole class. It is effective to simply go around the room from pair to pair and continue until about a fourth or half of the pairs have had a chance to report.

Think Pair Share technique is effective in English learning, especially to improve students' reading comprehension. In this technique, students think individually, cooperate with their pairs/groups, and share with classmates. It will make students learn teamwork. In the teaching and learning process of reading, The Think Pair Share technique can arouse students' involvement. It encourages the students to be actively involved in classroom activities. It creates a learning atmosphere that is full of encouragement and positive cooperation among the group as well. Kagan and Kagan (2009) mentioned benefits of The Think Pair Share technique. When students have appropriate time to think, the quality of their responses is improved. Students are actively engaged in thinking and, therefore, thinking becomes more focused when it is discussed with a partner.

Challenges

Throughout this chapter, I have explained the enormous benefits that shared reading and read aloud approaches bring to bilingual students in fostering English language learning. Routinely incorporating these approaches into reading workshops helps bilingual students increase their English literacy skills. These workshops foster language learning and enjoyment of reading.

One of the difficulties that bilingual teachers might face during the delivery of these reading workshops could be the lack of motivation of some students because they might not understand what the teacher says in English. These students might feel a little

lost and might not demonstrate attention or interest to the lesson. At this point, the teachers need to find a way to catch students' attention through interactive activities that enable their participation. When the reading workshops become more consistent and part of the learning routines in the classroom, students will get more involved in these mini lessons which may help them develop a deeper understanding and common sense of the importance of the reading workshops and how these have helped them increase their literacy skills.

Furthermore, bilingual teachers might find students who have limited literacy skills and academic vocabulary in the first language (L1). Thus, teachers need to familiarize themselves with the basics of phonology and spelling in their students' first language, this will help them to better understand their students' literacy development in English, and they will be better prepared to help students develop both English literacy skills and oral language proficiency (Helman, 2004). In addition, this instruction may enable bilingual students to transfer unfamiliar words and knowledge from L1 to L2. This experience can support their academic performance.

Conclusion

Good teachers must not only plan well and be lifelong learners themselves, but they may also know their students and be able to advocate for their academic needs. Educating emergent bilingual students is more than just good teaching (De Jong & Harper, 2005; Gándara & Santibañez, 2016).

Thus, the implementation of reading workshops will enable bilingual learners to develop and increase their cognitive, oral, and written skills in English language. The

development of these skills will also enable bilingual students to interact and share their thoughts in a relaxing learning environment. These reading workshops will become part of a learning routine that unconsciously will shape students' mindsets about what reading means, how important it is to develop language skills and academic knowledge.

Finally, these reading workshops, and the implementation of interactive read aloud models and the Think Pair- Share technique will enable bilingual students to foster effective English learning processes in the classroom. These reading workshops will also help kindergarten students with limited literacy to strengthen their L1 foundational skills and transfer them effectively to L2.

Chapter 3: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale for designing five reading workshops aimed at fostering English literacy skills in a bilingual learning context where English is taught as a second language. These five reading workshops are intended to be a guide for bilingual teachers to use when planning classes and teaching bilingual students with limited literacy skills in the target language.

Reading is one component of language and literacy. The National Assessment Governing Board and the U.S. Department of Education (2012), within the Reading Framework for the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress, defined reading as “an active and complex process that involves understanding written text, developing and interpreting meaning, and using meaning as appropriate to text, purpose, and situation” (p. 2). According to Brown (2014), “language and literacy develop over time and incorporate many skills for mastery.” Reading development follows a similar pattern across all populations of children. Initially, children develop an awareness and interest in print and then they move on to phonological and phonemic awareness before progressing to letter recognition and finally word recognition (Brown, 2014). As stated before, reading is an important component crucial to helping young children develop literacy skills. This reading process is complex and requires that children develop foundational literacy skills such as print concepts, phonological awareness, and letter-word recognition.

I believe becoming literate is a human right, and I am convinced it is a skill every child must achieve to be successful in modern society. However, this process becomes more challenging for bilingual learners whose primary language at home differs from the language they use to communicate and learn in school. Additionally, there is another factor that may negatively impact bilingual learners' literacy process. It is related to economic disadvantages bilingual learners might experience in their homes (August & Hakuta, 1997; McArthur, 1993). Statistics suggest that children whose first language is Spanish are at risk for poor literacy outcomes in U.S schools (cite). Spanish-speaking children, for example, are twice as likely as English native speakers to read below age level in English and are more likely to drop out of high school (Snow et al., 1998).

Bilingual learners deserve well-trained bilingual educators who foster a healthy, safe, and diverse learning environment, which helps bilingual learners effectively develop foundational literacy skills in English. Preparing students well during their initial language stages may help reduce the reading achievement gap and enable them to succeed in U.S. schools.

The main goal of this project is to design reading workshops to help teachers foster and nurture a pleasant and effective learning environment for English learning in a kindergarten bilingual classroom. This project contains strategies, methods, approaches, and activities that bilingual teachers can use as part of their reading lessons to foster and develop foundational English literacy skills. I also suggest bilingual books with familiar cultural content which may help young bilingual students become actively involved in the lessons and enable them to learn more about their own cultural heritages. The implementation of these reading workshops may also help bilingual learners to build a

mindset that reading is an important skill they must develop in order to be able to understand and read the world in which they live.

The reading workshops provide five mini-lesson plans designed with appropriate English language strategies, approaches and activities that allow bilingual learners to develop literacy skills in an enjoyable and reflective learning environment. These mini lessons promote each student's active participation and reflection on his or her own learning process. The reading workshops are divided into five steps: a) connection, b) introducing the teaching point, c) active engagement activities, d) transfer of the teaching point to another context and (3) finally, the reading workshops are designed to enable bilingual teachers to help bilingual learners develop English literacy skill in a healthy, pleasant, and engaging educational environment that increases bilingual student's motivation and achievement while reducing their anxiety.

Chapter 4: The Project

The present project intends to design a teacher's guide of effective reading workshops for fostering English language learning in a bilingual kindergarten classroom. These reading workshops could be used as an additional literacy resource for bilingual teachers who are looking for effective activities that foster English language acquisition for children in bilingual classrooms. Likewise, these reading workshops look to foster a healthy and dynamic learning environment in which bilingual students can develop cognitive and oral foundational skills.

Additionally, it is pivotal to mention that Calkins' workshop guide *Units of Study for Teaching Reading* (2015) plays a relevant role in this project. Calkins' approaches, techniques, strategies, and routines have been used and adjusted to better meet the needs of bilingual students. This teaching resource has been an excellent academic tool which has helped young students to foster English literacy skills in a bilingual learning environment.

The teacher's guide to bilingual reading workshops contains five mini lessons. A title or name has been assigned to each mini lesson and each mini lesson needs to follow six delivery steps. The first is called **Connection**. This step enables bilingual learners to connect with previous knowledge experiences and the new learning topic. The second is called **Introducing Teaching Point**. This step allows the teacher to communicate to bilingual learners the learning goal of the session. The third is called **Teaching**. This step allows the teacher to provide meaningful and precise instruction to students. The goal of this step is to be concise and capture students' attention for the short periods in which

young children best engage. The fourth is called **Students' Active Engagement**. This step allows bilingual students actively to engage and apply the new knowledge through meaningful independent or small group activities. The fifth is called **Link**. This step enables bilingual learners to apply the new knowledge in context. The last one is called **Share**. In this step, bilingual learners are encouraged to reflect about what they have learned and share their innovative ideas and thoughts in front of others. These six delivery steps should be a part of every reading mini lesson.

A mini lesson in each of the workshops is further supported by posters, songs and other activities described in this guide. Details of the five mini lessons are presented below.

The Teacher's Guide to Bilingual Reading Workshops

Mini lesson 1 "Discovering I am a reader"

This reading workshop introduces effective reading strategies that bilingual learners need to learn in order to become independent readers. In this workshop, the teacher uses environmental print to check what his/her students can read in English and in Spanish. The main goal of this reading workshop is to enable bilingual students to discover and recognize themselves as readers. In addition, this reading workshop provides foundational reading strategies that bilingual learners may need to use to read effectively.

MINI LESSON DELIVERY STEPS	DESCRIPTION	ALLOTTED TIME	MATERIALS
CONNECTION	Teacher invites students to rally on the rug for the reading mini lesson. While students are meeting at the rug, they sing the gathering song. The teacher assigns each student a spot on the rug. Figure 4.1: Gathering Song Lyrics .docx - Google Docs	3 minutes	Gathering song anchor chart
INTRODUCING TEACHING POINT	“Today, I want to teach you that readers can read the world that is around them. You can also do this by reading names, signs, directions, labels, thing and	2 minutes	Sentence strips Markers Tape

	singing songs which are familiar for you.”		
TEACHING	Initially, the teacher shows to familiar images to the students in a PowerPoint presentation (e.g., MacDonald sign, stop sign, school bus, a car, etc.). Then, the teacher invites students to walk around the classroom and read all the environmental print they find in the classroom. Then the teacher gathers students on the rug and asks them to share some words they read. Before this activity, the teacher needs to label twenty items around the classroom to help students read them.	10 minutes	Class items labeled. Index cards Markers Tape

STUDENT'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	The teacher invites pairs of students to practice reading them together. Try reading a set of images that teacher provides in a Ziploc bag with a partner. Students take turns to sound out the words and identify the initial sound. After that, students will write the letters they see and hear on a whiteboard. <u>Figure 4.2: Teacher's Master Cards.docx - Google Docs</u>	10 minutes	Prepare images in a Ziploc bag. Whiteboards Dry markers Dry erasers .
LINK	The teacher lets students know they are readers that they can go through the world seeing, thinking, and reading. The teacher tells students that they can do	5 minutes	

	these similar activities at home or in other places.		
SHARE	The teacher gathers students on the rug. Then, the teacher says, “Turn and talk with the person next to you.” “Right now, pretend you read signs on your way from home to school. What signs can you read? Think and talk to your partner about this.” Finally, students share some ideas.	5 minutes	

Mini lesson 2 “Activating bilingual learners’ reading skills”

The goal of this mini lesson is to build a readers’ mindsets in a bilingual, kindergarten child. Telling students, they are readers, that they can read words in and out of school, and that they can read a book by looking closely at the pictures is powerful for them. These meaningful practices may help bilingual learners to build a strong mindset that they are readers. In addition, this reading mini lesson may help bilingual learners increase their self-esteem and recognize themselves as readers of the world. Although these skills have not yet developed print and phonemic awareness skills at this time, it is

important to emphasize that they will master these skills progressively. Bilingual learners need to hear that reading can be hard and that it is a prolonged process that requires so much practice. The purpose of this reading mini lesson is to build an environment that helps bilingual learners become eager readers.

MINI LESSON DELIVERY STEPS	DESCRIPTION	ALLOTTED TIME	MATERIALS
CONNECTION	The teacher invites students to rally on the rug for the reading mini lesson. While students are meeting on the rug, they sing the gathering song. Figure 4.1: <u>Gathering Song Lyrics .docx - Google Docs</u>	3 minutes	Gathering song anchor chart.
	“Today, I want to teach you that you can learn about any topic through books. You need to look at the pictures closely and think about those pictures.”	3 minutes	Sentence strips Markers Tape

INTRODUCING TEACHING POINT	The teacher can use sentences strips to write the teaching point down and post this on the wall to remind students what the learning goal is.		
STUDENT'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	The teacher encourages students to try the same work. The teacher says, "Now, choose someone next to you as a partner today. Sit side by side and put the book in the middle. After that, with your partner start studying the book from cover to cover." The teacher also reminds students to check the anchor chart while they are reading. The teacher will hold up the book called <i>The Little Red Riding Hood Retold</i> by Karen Mocker.	10 minutes	The teacher master book "The Little Red Riding Hood" <i>Retold</i> by Karen Mocker.

	The teacher will provide copies of the same book to all the students. Figure 4.3: “<u>I am a reader</u>” <u>Anchor Chart .pptx - Google Slides</u>		
LINK	The teacher sends students to the assigned seats. On their way to the assigned seats, the teacher invites students to grab a book from the class book tub. The teacher has students read their books by building from the beginning, page by page, to the end.	10 minutes	
	The teacher invites students to gather on the rug and sit on their spots. The teacher says, “Now, it is time to share one important thing you have learned today. Turn and talk to	5 minutes	

SHARE	the person next to you.” Finally, students share some ideas and thoughts.		
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Mini lesson 3 “Introducing Reading Behaviors”

This mini lesson teaches bilingual learners about reading behaviors and the importance of using those behaviors when they read. Bilingual learners need to learn how to handle books, identify the main parts of a book and recognizing punctuation, among other things. Learning these concepts may help bilingual learners to read books appropriately and have a better comprehension of the book.

In addition, this and the previous mini lesson promote a significant learning routine at the beginning of the lesson that helps children move from one activity to the next. Reading and singing the gathering song every day may help students to learn the song by heart. This activity reinforces letter identification and matching pictures with words.

MINI LESSON DELIVERY STEPS	DESCRIPTION	ALLOTTED TIME	MATERIALS
CONNECTION	The teacher reminds students that even though is day three they are already readers. The teacher invites students to rally on the rug for reading and singing the gathering song. The teacher points out the anchor chart and tracks the song words while the students are singing it.	3 minutes	The teacher uses a PowerPoint presentation of the song and reads it with students while they sit on the rug. Figure 4.4: Gathering Song Slides.
INTRODUCING TEACHING POINT	Today I want to teach you that there are some words and behaviors you need to learn and use every time you read a book.	2 minutes	The teacher uses sentences strips to write it down and remember student's what

			the learning goal is.
TEACHING	The teacher demonstrates how to study the cover of a book and use the pictures to try to figure out the title and what the book is about. The teacher uses the nonfiction book <i>The Little Red Riding Hood Retold</i> by Karen Mockler. This familiar story may help engage students in this mini lesson. Then, the teacher shows students how to read the pictures and the title. The teacher also points out and read reads the author' and the names illustrator's names and explains why they are important. Then,	10 minutes	Teacher's book <i>The Little Red Riding Hood Retold</i> by Karen Mockler.

	the teacher walks throughout the pictures of the book and shows students how to turn pages, study the pictures, and find where to start reading out where readers start reading.		
STUDENT'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	The teacher encourages students to try the same work. The teacher says, "Now is your turn. I want you to read a book. Turn your body and talk to the person next to you. Then put the book in the middle and start studying the book from cover to cover." The teacher also reminds students to check the anchor chart while they are reading. I hold up a book called <i>The Little Red Riding Hood Retold</i> by Karen Mocker.	10 minutes	The teacher master book "The Little Red Riding Hood" <i>Retold</i> by Karen Mocker.

	The teacher will provide copies of the same book to all students. Figure 4.3: “<u>I am a reader</u>” <u>Anchor Chart .pptx - Google Slides</u>		
LINK	The teacher sends students to the assigned seats. On the way to their assigned seats, the teacher invites students to grab a book from the class book tub. The teacher has students read their books by building from the beginning, page by page, to the end.	10 minutes	
SHARE	The teacher invites students to gather on the rug and sit on their spots. The teacher says, “Now it is time to share one important thing you have	5 minutes	

	learned today. Turn your body and talk to the person next to you.” Finally, students share some ideas and thoughts.		
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Mini lesson 4 “Encouraging bilingual students to read independently”

This mini lesson encourages bilingual learners to become independent readers and use their reading time wisely. This activity when repeated regularly, helps five-and six-year-olds regulate their feelings and movements in order to use the reading time successfully. The goal of this mini lesson is to help bilingual students become independent and self-directed learners who can take control of their own learning processes. This reading workshop contains some strategies that may help them to develop self-director skills effectively.

MINI LESSON DELIVERY STEPS	DESCRIPTION	ALLOTTED TIME	MATERIALS
	The teacher reminds students that they are already readers. The teacher invites students to rally on the rug for reading and singing the gathering song. The	3 minutes	Power Point presentation Projector Smart board

CONNECTION	teacher points out the anchor chart and tracks the song words while the students are singing it. The teacher uses a PowerPoint presentation of the song and reads this with students while they are walking to their rug spots. Figure 4.4: <u>Gathering Song Slides .pptx - Google Slides</u>		
INTRODUCING TEACHING POINT	“Today, I want to teach you something important that all readers do around the world. Readers from Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and Puerto Rico like to read by themselves, privately in a quiet place.” The teacher uses sentences strips to write the teaching point down	2 minutes	Sentence strips Markers Tape

	and reminds the students what the learning goal is.		
TEACHING	The teacher invites students to look at her/him while she/he is reading a book privately. The teacher chooses the book <i>It is Mine</i> by Isabel Munoz. The students look at the teacher for a while and find important things readers do while they read alone. Then, the teacher asks students what they noticed readers do when they read on their own?	10 minutes	The teacher's book <i>It is Mine</i> by Isabel Munoz.
STUDENT'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	The teacher invites students to read privately. "Now, it is your turn. Readers, go to your seats, choose a book from your tub to read on your own."	10 minutes	Book tubs With a variety of books among A-C levels.

LINK	The teacher gathers students on the rug and explains how important it is to have a time to read independently. “Today, you learned that no matter who is with you in school or at home you can read on your own.”	3 minutes	
SHARE	The teacher celebrates and recognizes students’ effort for reading independently. The teacher says, “Readers, I watched you and noticed how you applied the reading behaviors you have learned. You are becoming amazing readers. Let us celebrate that with a cheer!”	5 minutes	

Mini lesson 5 “Teaching bilingual learners how to use their time effectively”

This mini lesson wants to help bilingual learners to develop a mindset about how important it is to use time appropriately and make good choices about their own reading processes. Strategies such as interactive reading aloud and the Think Pair Share can help

develop effective reading skills routines. Developing these skills early may promote bilingual students' abilities to focus, start, and complete a learning task independently.

MINI LESSON DELIVERY STEPS	DESCRIPTION	ALLOTTED TIME	MATERIALS
CONNECTION	The teacher reminds students even though it is day five, they are already readers. The teacher invites students to rally on the rug for reading and singing the gathering song. The teacher points out the anchor chart and tracks the song words while the students are singing it. The teacher shows students a sand clock and asks students, “what do you notice about it? Have you seen this item before? Do you know how to use the sand clock? What is the sand clock used for? Now, turn your body, think, and	10 minutes	PowerPoint presentation Gathering song. Smart board

	talk to your partner. Finally, students share their ideas. The teacher uses a PowerPoint presentation of the song and reads this with students while students are finding their spots on the rug. Figure 4.4: <u>Gathering Song Slides .pptx - Google Slides</u>		
INTRODUCING TEACHING POINT	” Today, I want to teach you that teacher and students need to set up reminders that help them use their time effectively.” The teacher uses sentences strips to write the teaching point down and remind students what the learning goal is.	2 minutes	Sentence strips Markers Tape
	The teacher mentions how to important it is to set up reminders that allow students to know when		

TEACHING	to start a task and finish it. The teacher demonstrates how to read a book for a minute. For this lesson, the teacher chose the book <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> by Eric Carle. Then, the teacher stops reading the book. After that, the teacher says, “Now, it is time for me to draw about what I read.” Then the teacher sets up the timer again and starts drawing. Finally, the teacher asks students to turn their bodies and think and talk to their partners about what they noticed. Students share their ideas and thoughts.	10 minutes	Teacher’s master book <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> by Eric Carle. White paper A sand clock
	The teacher says, “Now, it is your turn to practice what I did.” On your table, you will find your book tubs, paper and sand timers		Book tubs Sand clocks

STUDENT'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT	which may help to remember when to switch from reading activity to drawing activity. The teacher sends students off to their seats to start their work.	10 minutes	White papers Pencils
LINK	The teacher gathers students on the rug and recognizes their efforts to use their time productively. "I want to tell you that there are other timers that can remind people when to start and stop a task. Some tasks are longer than others and people spend more or less time doing these tasks." Remember you can use timers at school or at home to help you use your time effectively.	3 minutes	
	The teacher says, "Readers, it is time for you to share your work	5 minutes	

SHARE	and talk about what you did during your work time.” Students show their papers and talk about them.		
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Chapter 5: Conclusion

The development of this research project helped me understand the importance of fostering reading skills in Kindergarten through the implementation of reading workshops. Throughout the past three months, I had the opportunity to implement the teacher's guide to bilingual reading workshops to help 24 bilingual students to develop foundational English literacy skills in Kindergarten. Since the English language proficiency of these students was poor, they were assessed by the school central office to determine which language of instruction (English or Spanish) would benefit them best in the school. As a result, these students were enrolled in a bilingual classroom where 80% of instruction would be in Spanish and 20% in English. When the school year began, these students were not able to understand and communicate their ideas effectively in English to the teacher. It was evident that these groups of learners had not been immersed in an English language conversation for prolonged periods of time, and even fewer had ever been in a school environment. For the first month, I heard children telling me "Can you say that in Spanish?" or "I do not understand you," etc. I could see on their faces that they were lost.

Through this research project, I have learned that school administrators can have a well-organized curriculum, methods, strategies, and assessments which tell teachers what to teach, how to teach, what to assess, and how to assess students in the classroom. However, many times, administrators and teachers forget that they are working with human beings. Each student is unique and has his or her own way to learn. In order to develop their full potential, all students deserve to be in the best place to find the best

way to learn. Thus, teachers play the most important role in the classroom, especially those who teach Pre-K and Kindergarten. Those teachers have a great responsibility to get to know the students well and guide them in their learning processes and guide each with sensitivity. Those teachers need to identify students' needs, strengths, and weaknesses and commit in helping them. Those teachers need to be kind, flexible, and dynamic to gain students' confidence to motivate them. All my years of experience as a bilingual educator and the development of this project have confirmed that teachers' role, their commitment, and the learning environment they promote in the classroom are crucial to helping students achieve their academic goals-

I hope that this teacher's guide to bilingual reading workshops helps other teachers to foster a healthy and inclusive learning environment in which students can develop literacy and English language skills effectively. Any teacher who decides to teach a second language needs to be taught how young bilingual learners develop literacy and second language skills in the primary learning stages. I hope this project can help other international teachers who teach in the in Pre-K and Kindergarten to expand their knowledge of the importance of fostering literacy skills through bilingual reading workshops. It is my hope that all bilingual teachers of young children will understand reading as more than just learning letters, sounds, and words. In the future, I would love to train other teachers in my home country about how to foster literacy skills in English and Spanish through reading workshops.

A long term-goal would be the creation of a comprehensive and complete teacher's guide to bilingual reading workshops which allows teachers to develop meaningful practices that foster literacy skills in a relaxed English learning environment.

A short-term goal should be that schools that provide this service to bilingual learners would focus on hiring bilingual teachers who understand this population and its culture as well as its language. I believe having such teachers with whom young bilingual learners can identify would help their comfort and sense of belonging in the classroom and could improve their achievements.

Appendices

Appendix A: Figures

Figure 4.1: Gathering Song Lyrics



Figure 4.2: Teacher's Master Cards.





Appendix B: Slides

Figure 4.3: “I am a reader” Anchor Chart Slides.

Slide #1



Slide #2



Slide #3



Slide #4



Figure 4.4: Gathering Song Slides.

Slide #1



Slide #2

LET'S READ!

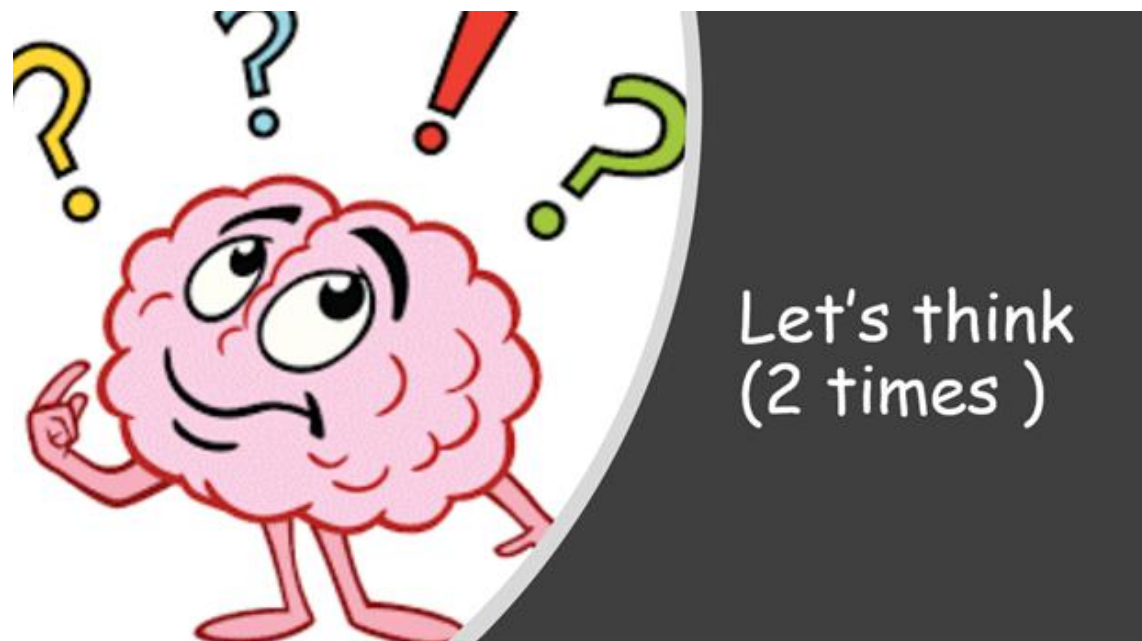


Let's read
(2 times)

Slide #3



Slide #4



Slide #5



Everybody is
here, everybody
is here.

Slide #6



Everybody is
ready to learn.

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